

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 1568

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: PERONIST CONGRESS BOYCOTTED BY MRS. PERON'S OPPONENTS

REF: BUENOS AIRES 1496

1. PERONIST PARTY CONGRESS TURNED OUT TO BE NOT SO MUCH A DOG FIGHT (SEE REFEL), AS A DUD. ANTI-VERTICALISTAS DECIDED TO BOYCOTT IT. MRS. PERON, WHO PROBABLY WOULD HAVE HAD NO MORE THAN 130 OF THE 280 DELEGATED OTHERWISE, WAS THUS ABLE TO PACK IN ENOUGH DELEGATES FROM VERTICALISTA-CONTROLLED PROVINCES TO HAVE QUORUM AND CONTROL CONGRESS. ROBLEDO, BAEZ AND SEVERAL OTHER ANTI-VERTICALISTAS WHO TRIED TO ATTEND (APPARENTLY WITH VIEW TO STATING THEIR CASE) WERE THREATENED BY VERTICALISTA STRONG-ARM SQUADS AND WITHDREW. NEW SUPERIOR COUNCIL IS COMPLETELY SUBSERVIENT TO MRS. PERON AND HER ENTOURAGE. COMPOSITION IS AS FOLLOWS: PRES-MRS. PERON; VICE PRES-DEOLINDO FELIPE BITTEL (GOV OF EL CHACO); SECOND VICE PRES-NESTOR CARRASCO; SEC GEN-LAZARO ROCA. ELOY CAMUS WAS ELECTED PRES OF THE PARTY CONGRESS AND SEN ARMANDO CARO HEAD OF THE PARTY DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL.

2. THIS WAS PYRRHIC VICTORY FOR MRS. PERON SINCE BOYCOTT ON PART OF ANTI-VERTICALISTAS UNDERLINED THAT SPLIT IN PARTY IS COMPLETE. AS ONE ANTI-VERTICALISTA LEADER FROM WORKING GROUP COMMENTED TO EMBOFF: "WE
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ARE THROUGH WITH ANY PARTY STRUCTURE THAT INCLUDES

MRS. PERON AND HER GANG. WE ARE STILL PERONISTS, BUT NOT HER KIND."

3. SAME SOURCE, WHEN ASKED IF IT MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN TACTICAL MISTAKE TO ABANDON PARTY APPARATUS TO MRS. PERON, REPLIED NEGATIVELY. "THAT IS NO LONGER OUR PARTY," HE SAID, ADDING THAT NEW COUNCIL WAS UNIMPORTANT ANYWAY SINCE IT WOULD NOT LAST MORE THAN A MONTH AND WOULD THEN BE SWEEPED AWAY BY THE MILITARY. WORST THING, HE COMMENTED, WOULD HAVE BEEN TO HAVE FULL-SCALE AND HIGHLY VISIBLE BATTLE AT CONGRESS. "BETTER TO RECOGNIZE SPLIT, LET MRS. PERON HAVE HER PARTY, AND WE'LL HAVE OURS," HE CONCLUDED.

4. NOT ALL ANTI-VERTICALISTAS AGREED WITH DECISION TO BOYCOTT. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT FORCES NOW GATHERED IN WORKING GROUP AND PERONIST REAFFIRMATION WERE THOSE THAT WALKED OUT OF LAST CONGRESS, WHILE ROBLEDO AND BAEZ DEFENDED MRS. PERON AND WERE STILL CONSIDERED TO BE VERTICALISTAS. LATTER FORCES HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY MOVED OVER TO ANTI-VERTICALISTA CAMP. THEY WOULD HAVE LIKED TO CHALLENGED MRS. PERON AT THE CONGRESS. WORKING GROUP AND PERONIST REAFFIRMATION, HOWEVER, DECIDED TO FOLLOW LINE CONSISTENT WITH LAST YEAR'S WALKOUT-- I.E. TO BOYCOTT. WITH HALF THE ANTI-VERTICALISTA FORCES THUS ABSENT, ROBLEDO-BAEZ GROUP REALIZED THEY WOULD BE OUTGUNNED BY VERTICALISTAS AND DECIDED TO SEND ONLY TOKEN REPRESENTATION. AS NOTED ABOVE, LEADERS DID NOT GET IN AND OTHER REPRESENTATIVES WERE BOOED AND SHOUTED DOWN AT CONGRESS.

5. MRS. PERON, CHEERED BY CLAUQUE WHICH ASSURED HER "ISABEL IS DIVINE*", SPOKE TWICE AT CONGRESS. NEITHER SPEECH MEMORABLE FOR CONTENT OR DELIVERY. SHE CALLED FOR UNITY AND SAID SHE WOULD CONTINUE TO WORK FOR GOOD OF PARTY AND COUNTRY, AS MUST ALL PERONISTS. SHE HAD NO NEW IDEAS OR DIRECTIONS TO OFFER, HOWEVER, EVEN WHEN SHE ADMITTED THAT ARGENTINA MIGHT BE "ON EVE OF EVENTS FROM WHICH THERE WAS NO RETURN." DESPITE HER CALLS FOR UNITY, MOREOVER, WHEN CLAUQUE CHANTED THAT OPPONENTS SHOULD

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BE HUNG, SHE COUNTERED THAT THEY SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO HANG THEMSELVES. SHE ALSO ALLUDED TO DESIRE AT TIMES ON HER PART TO USE WHIP AND EVEN AXE ON HER OPPONENTS.

6. PRESS REPS COMPLAINED THAT THEY WERE THREATENED OUTSIDE MEETING HALL AND HAD TO ASK FOR POLICE PROTECTION; ALSO THAT THERE WAS GENERAL ATMOSPHERE OF HOSTILITY TO PRESS AT THE CONGRESS ITSELF. THIS NOT SUPRIRING

SINCE MRS. PERON HERSELF REFERRED TO "LIBERTINISM"
OF PRESS IN ONE OF HER SPEECHES (SEE SEPTTEL).

7 COMMENT: IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHAT CONSEQUENCES
WILL FLOW FROM ANTI-VERTICALISTA BOYCOTT. MAIN QUESTION
IS WHETHER OR NOT THEY NOW PLAN TO ORGANIZE THEIR
OWN PARTY. WORKING GROUP ALREADY CONSTITUTES BLOC
SEPARATE FROM PERONIST BLOC IN CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES,
BUT PERONIST REAFFIRMATION IS DESCRIBED AS A "TENDENCY"
WITHIN PERONISM, NOT AS A SEPARATE PARTY. FACT THAT
ANTI-VERTICALISTAS TURNED JUSTICIALISTA PARTY STRUCTURE
OVER TO MRS. PERON WITHOUT A STRUGGLE, HOWEVER, SUGGESTS
THAT SOME OF THEM MAY BE THINKING OF TURNING IT INTO
ONE.
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